

Abstract 448

TITLE: Is Sexual Abuse Related to Increased Sexual Risk Taking Among Male and Female High School Students?

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: To assess whether sexually active male and female high school students with a history of sexual abuse report higher sexual risk-taking behaviors and impregnation/pregnancy rates than those not reporting a history of sexual abuse.

METHOD: For the purpose of this study we analyzed a subset of data collected in the Massachusetts Youth Behavior Risk Behavior (YRBS) Survey (n = 4014). This data set was obtained by surveys from high school students in Massachusetts; students were asked about a variety of health risk behaviors including sexual risk behavior and history of sexual abuse. YRBS participants included in this study were male (n = 779) or female (n = 831) students who had engaged in sexual intercourse. Participants were evenly distributed across grades 9-12; over 73% of participants were ages 15-17. The majority (70%) of the sample was white; approximately 20% of the sample were black or Latino. Data were analyzed via logistic regression analyses in which sexual abuse was the dependent variable. Sexual risk behaviors (age at first coitus, multiple partnering ever, multiple partnering in past 30 days, alcohol use at last sex, condom use at last sex, birth control use at last sex, and pregnancy history) were predictor variables. Demographics significantly related to each predictor variable were controlled for in these analyses. Analyses were weighted to account for the high participant response rate.

RESULTS: History of sexual abuse, defined as having ever experienced sexual contact against your will, was common among participants, 30.2% of females and 9.3% of males reporting a history of sexual abuse. Females with a history of sexual abuse were 2.4x more likely to report earlier age at first intercourse (95%CI = 1.2-4.7), 3.0x more likely to report 3 or more sex partners ever (95%CI = 1.6-5.6), and 2.1x more likely to have become pregnant (95%CI = 1.0-4.4). Men with a history of sexual abuse were almost 3.8x more likely to report 3 or more sex partners ever (95%CI = 1.3-11.5) and 5.0x more likely to report multiple partnering in the past 30 days (95%CI = 1.8-14.0). They are also 2.6x more likely to have used alcohol at last intercourse (95%CI = 1.0-6.7) and 5.2x more likely to report having gotten someone pregnant (95%CI = 1.76-15.65).

CONCLUSION: Among this sexually active high school sample, both males and females with a history of sexual abuse report higher sexual risk taking than those without a history of sexual abuse. While sexual abuse is three times more common among females, the association between history of sexual abuse and sexual risk taking among males appears to be even more dramatic. Sexual health intervention programs for both adolescent males and females must be prepared to address history of sexual abuse. Further research is needed to determine if sexual abuse is a causal factor in increased sexual risk taking among adolescents.

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